

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

LEVEL
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NEED FOR MORE GENERAL CHRISTIAN "LITERATURE" STRESSED

Fiction, and other types of "non-theological" literature must be increasingly used in evangelization according to conclusions reached at the recent meeting of the 7 sub-committees of the NCC Literature Dept. A recent publishers survey indicated that the general reading public reads very little literature which is not of the fictional type, and further that only 18.9% of the 15,000 surveyed read many books of any kind, whereas 51% read magazines regularly. Evangelistic literature must be geared to the reading tastes of the general public, and these media must be used as settings for conveying at least the fundamentals of the Christian message to many who would not be reached in any other way, if literature evangelism is to serve its purpose. In keeping with this theory the Literature Commission announced its 3rd annual novel contest for Christian short novels.

Following this report by Literature Comm. Sec. Norimichi Ebisawa, the conference went on to discuss Theology & Classics and Concordance, Literature of Devotion and Evangelism, Literature for Young people, Religious Fiction, and Children's Literature. In speaking on theology, Prof. Chuichi Ueki of Doshisha Seminary emphasized the need for a joint theological work by professors of various seminaries in Japan. He pointed out that up to the present almost all the theological works in Japan are translations of foreign writings, and Japan needs to have some indigenous theological research.

The need for more devotional works which would encourage deep meditation was pointed out by the Rev. Takeshi Muto of Chuo Kaido, Tokyo. He emphasized that these works must also be understandable to the average layman.

Young people's need for more guidance in selecting literature was emphasized by Prof. Kikuo Yamaoka of Chiba University. He also contended that more commentaries on Social affairs which would link Christianity to every day problems would also be helpful to the students.

Mrs. Hanako Muraoka explained that Christian "literature" does not have to be full of Christian terms or be about Christian affairs. If it contains and points up the Christian spirit it will serve a definite purpose. She further explained that most people who see the many fine religious movies now being imported are not sufficiently familiar with Christian principles and biblical affairs to appreciate the point of the story. More fictional type Christian writing would open up new realms of appreciation along these lines.

Since 100% of the Japanese pre-school children believe in God, and 63% of them can read simple Japanese phonetics and characters, more literature must be published with this age group in mind, according to Miss Hatsue Sato, leader of the Christian Kindergarten Union, and the concluding speaker of the conference.

In addition to the discussion, the conference talked over specific plans for future publications, and made a 5 year plan which will carry it to the centennial year.

AVACO SEEKS TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL

The Japanese people love audio-visual stimulus. They have a strongly developed aesthetic sense, a love of beauty as expressed in nature or in works of art. Where speeches couched in abstract words would leave them cold, farm people will gather after long hour in the rice fields to laugh and weep at the plays of traveling puppeteers or troupes of players. This love of drama, which has the power to break up the monotony of wresting a living from their rocky islands, spills over into active interest in movies, television, exhibits, radio, etc. They love the whole range of music from the ballad-singer to the most profound works of Bach and Beethoven.

These facts have strongly influenced plans laid out by the Audio Visual Aids Commission of the NCC for the next five years. In addition to pushing ahead with proclaiming the Gospel through films, film-strips, radio and television, plans are in the making for utilizing other techniques of mass communications which it is felt will be peculiarly effective in Japan.

One of these is the "Kamishibai", or paper play, which is beginning to come into use in Church Schools in the West. This is a series of pictures on cards which illustrate a story. The storyteller holds them in front of him or has them in a small wooden theatre, removing one at a time as the narrative progresses.

AVACO also hopes to develop a traveling troupe of players to evangelize rural areas through presenting the Gospel in drama. Those who remember the medieval miracle and mystery plays will recognize that this is not a new technique. The similar use of puppets is being explored.

The phenomenal success of an exhibit a year and a half ago at Shirokiya Department Store in Tokyo which illustrated Christian life and history by pictures, graphs, works of art, and objects from

Japanese church history, has led to plans for collecting a similar exhibit to be sent all over Japan.

It is also planned to experiment with use of traditional storytelling and ballad-story techniques in rural evangelism.

One of the highlights of this summer's all-Japan workshop on audiovisual aids will be two lectures on "Esthetics and Christian Worship" by Rev. Kitamori of Tokyo Theological Seminary. It is hoped that this will lead to some serious thought as to how worship can be enriched in terms of audio-visual stimuli.

As we near the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of Protestant evangelism in Japan perhaps these experiments will help us find more effective means of reaching the Japanese people for Christ, and show us techniques which can be profitably used in other countries.

LACOUR CAMPAIGN AIMS AT 10 NEW CHURCHES

A new approach to pioneer evangelism will be given its first try in Japan this summer when the 24 members of the Lacour Evangelical Band spend 2 months in Fukushima in a concentrated campaign whose object is to establish the foundations of 10 pioneer churches. The group, which will split into 3 teams will cover the towns which have been pinpointed for the campaign in rotation, so that each town will be the center of several series of meetings. The groups will try to encourage interested seekers not only to sign decision cards, but to go all the way and become baptized before the end of the campaign.

The newly baptized Christians in each town will then form the nucleus of a new church, it is hoped. Japanese pastors from nearby areas will accompany each of the teams on their tours, and will stand ready to take over the spiritual nurture of the new Christians, and the responsibility for the new churches.

Leader of the campaign is the Rev. Lawrence Lacour who is returning to Japan after an absence of 4 years under the sponsorship of the Lacour's Japan Mission, and with the support of the Centennial Committee of NCC.

Each of the members accompanying Lacour and his wife, were responsible for raising their own round trip passage for the trip. The group will use huge trailer as the center of operations and will tow it around from town to town by car. The trailer itself is 2.8 meters high, 2 meters wide, and 3 meters long, and converts into a 2 level stage. The musicians who accompany each evangelistic meeting will be on the first floor of the trailer and the speakers will on the upper level.

An official welcome was given the Lacour team at a reception given by the NCC on June 25. The members of the team are as follows: the Rev. and Mrs. Russell Hetzler, Dr. Alvin Maberry, Mr. & Mrs.

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David Cox; Dr. & Mrs. Wesley Pugh, Dr. C. Maxwell Brown, Mrs. Irene Nickerson, the Rev. Paul Folkers, the Rev. Garfield Steedman, the Rev. Lloyd Latta, the Rev. Carl Wilson, the Rev. Harold Camp, the Rev. Mark Sullivan, Mr. Tom Robb, Dr. & Mrs. Harry Richardson, the Rev. Charles Sexton, Miss Esther Squire, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Soka (who are also on their honeymoon). Music will be furnished the Sokas, and by Mrs. Lacour.

The Nihon Music Evangelistic Crusade will also cover the same areas during this time to reinforce the efforts of the Lacour group.

Before starting on their Fukushima campaign on July 1, the Lacour team drew crowds of over 3,000 in a 3 night campaign at Aoyama Gakuin. Other members of the group scattered all over Tokyo to preach in churches and give talks over the weekend. Each team will be accompanied by expert interpreters.

CENTENARY COMMISSION HOLDS MEETING AT ATAMI

The Life and Work Movement of the Centenary Commission, whose aim is to help Christianity penetrate into community life decided at their June 22 Atami meeting to hold a conference this summer with a rural evangelism expert, and to hold a training retreat this fall for workers in Social Welfare Institutes.

Although Social work was originated by Christianity in Japan, and was strong among the original social workers, this spirit has recently been decreasing, according to the findings of the commission. The training retreat this fall has been planned as a means of helping revive this Christian spirit.

The conference on rural life will be armed at combatting the feudalism which is still so strong in rural areas and generally improving rural life.

